

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03755 01 OF 03 061340Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----031457 061344Z /40

O P 061252Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8573
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 BEIRUT 3755

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PERP MOPS LE SY
SUBJ: BEIRUT FIGHTING - SYRIAN INTENTIONS

1. SUMMARY: CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY PREVAILS, AT LEAST IN BEIRUT, ON QUESTION OF WHAT, EXACTLY, SYRIANS HOPE TO ACHIEVE BY THEIR VERY HARD STRIKE OF LAST FOUR DAYS AT CHRISTIAN MILITIAS IN EAST BEIRUT. PUBLICLY, CAMILLE CHAMOUN IS TAKING THE HARDEST LINE CRITICAL OF THE SYRIANS, BUT PIERRE GEMAYEL IS ALSO IMPLYING BASE MOTIVES. BEIRUT PRESS IS OFFERING SPECULATION ON THE QUESTION. GOL LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN SILENT PUBLICLY ON THE QUESTION, AND BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTY OF PHYSICAL TRAVEL IN THE CITY AND SUBSTANTIAL BREAKDOWN OF TELEPHONE SYSTEM BETWEEN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT, WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE FOR LAST TWO DAYS TO HAVE ANY PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS. SYRIAN GOVERNMENT'S LINE IS QUITE CLEAR, ON OTHER HAND, CRITICIZING LEBANESE FRONT BROADLY OF SEEKING PARTITION,

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 03755 01 OF 03 061340Z

DESTRUCTION OF LEBANON AND OF NUMEROUS SPECIFIC PROVOCATIONS OF ADF SYRIAN FORCES ON THE GROUND. OUR OWN VIEW IS THAT SYRIAN PERCEPTION GENERALLY IS SUBSTANTIALLY CORRECT, BUT THAT SYRIAN MILITARY TACTIC OF LARGELY INDISCRIMINATE ARTILLERY FIRE ALL OVER EAST BEIRUT MAY PROVE TO BE BOTH POLITICALLY AND MILITARILY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. LEBANESE FRONT LEADERSHIP ATTITUDES. CAMILLE CHAMOUN APPEARS TO BE THE MOST PUBLICLY OUTSPOKEN CRITIC OF SYRIAN MILITARY ACTION IN BEIRUT OVER LAST FOUR DAYS. INDEPENDENT AN NAHAR JULY 4 QUOTED CHAMOUN AS SAYING THAT SYRIAN TROOPS ARE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT TO BOOST SYRIAN ARMY MORALE, BECAUSE "THEY ARE UNABLE TO RECOVER THE GOLAN HEIGHTS" FROM ISRAEL. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH A SENIOR EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE ON JULY 2, CHAMOUN AND VARIOUS OF HIS FOLLOWERS, INCLUDING NLP VICE PRESIDENT KAZIM KHALIL AND BUSINESSMAN FRANCOIS JABRE, DESCRIBED SYRIAN ACTION IN BEIRUT AS A PROLONGATION OF THE BEKAA INCIDENT OF JUNE 28 (IN WHICH SOME 30 PHALANGISTS WERE KILLED, PROBABLY BY TROOPS OF RIF'AT ASSAD, BROTHER OF THE SYRIAN PRESIDENT.) CHAMOUN COMPLAINED THAT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE CHRISTIAN AREAS IS NOT HAPPENING IN ANY OTHER AREA OF LEBANON AND ACCUSED PRESIDENT SARKIS OF GIVING ORDERS TO THE SYRIANS TO LIQUIDATE THE CHRISTIAN PARTIES, ESPECIALLY THE PHALANGE.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, ALWAYS CAREFUL TO AVOID SEEMING TO CRITICIZE THE SYRIANS, PHALANGE LEADER PIERRE GEMAYEL IN HIS DAILY PRESS CONFERENCE JULY 4, ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT-LE JOUR JULY 5, SAID: "I CANNOT IMAGINE A SINGLE INSTANCE IN WHICH DAMASCUS WOULD WANT TO STRIKE THOSE SAME LEBANESE WHO HAD WELCOMED ITS INITIATIVE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 03755 01 OF 03 061340Z

AND HAD EXPRESSED (TO SYRIA) THEIR SUPPORT AND APPRECIATION, TO THE EXTENT THAT THIS INITIATIVE WAS FREE OF SECTARIANISM." THE SYRIAN INITIATIVE IN LEBANON, GEMAYEL SAID, "HAD REVERSED THE ATTITUDES OF FOREIGN OPINION, WHICH WAS BEHOLDEN TO IMAGES OF FANATICISM AND RACISM ENGRAVED IN PEOPLE'S MINDS BY RIVAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION WELL KNOWN TO SYRIA AND ALL THE ARAB COUNTRIES." COMMENT: GEMAYEL IS SAYING THINGS WHICH THE SYRIANS LIKE TO HEAR, BUT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO LET THE LEBANESE POPULATION KNOW HIS REAL THOUGHT, THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE VIOLATED THEIR ARAB LEAGUE MANDATE, AND BECOME A SECTARIAN FORCE DETERMINED TO REDUCE THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. END COMMENT.

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03755 02 OF 03 061347Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----031519 061350Z /40

O P 061252Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8574
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 3 BEIRUT 3755

EXDIS

4. PRESS SPECULATION. INDEPENDENT LEADING ARABIC
DAILY AN NAHAR JULY 4 LISTED FOLLOWING AS CONDITIONS BEING
POSED BY THE SYRIANS PRIOR TO IMPLEMENTATION OF A REAL
CEASE-FIRE:

(A) "GIVING SYRIA CERTAIN DEFENSE AND SECURITY
FACILITIES IN SPECIFIC LEBANESE AREAS AS A PRECAUTION
AGAINST ISRAELI AGGRESSION;" (WE HAVE NO SPECIFIC INFORMATION
ON WHAT SUCH FACILITIES OR AREAS MIGHT BE.)

(B) "A DECISION ON REBUILDING THE ARMY (OF LEBANON)
TO INSURE A NATIONAL BALANCE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A
HIGHER DEFENSE COUNCIL WHICH WOULD SUPERVISE RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE ARMED FORCES. . . ON A BASIS THAT "LEBANON'S
SECURITY IS PART OF SYRIA'S SECURITY AND VICE-VERSA."
(AN ALLUSION TO THE OCCASIONALLY RUMORED SYRIAN-LEBANESE
MUTUAL DEFENSE PACT);

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 03755 02 OF 03 061347Z

(C) SETTLEMENT OF THE PROBLEM OF REGULAR LEBANESE
ARMY FORCES IN THE ISRAELI BORDER AREA "WHO ESTABLISHED
CLOSE COOPERATION WITH ISRAEL;"

(D) "STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE ADF IN ALL LEBANESE
DISTRICTS, AND ISSUING WRITTEN ORDERS TO THIS EFFECT."

5. PRO-SYRIAN ASH SHARQ AND AL LIWA, AS WELL AS LEFTIST

AS SAFIR, REPORTED THE SAME SYRIAN CONDITIONS, EXCEPT THE FIRST ONE. COMMENT: REPORTING BY AN NAHAR, WHICH SUPPORTS THE GOL (SENIOR EDITOR MICHELE ABU JAWDEH IS CLOSE PERSONAL FRIEND OF PRESIDENT SARKIS) AS WELL AS REPETITION IN PRO-SYRIAN PRESS, LEND ACCOUNT A HIGH DEGREE OF CREDIBILITY. END COMMENT.

6. GOL COMMENTARY. PUBLICLY GOL LEADERS HAVE SAID NOTHING ON QUESTION OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS IN PRESENT FIGHTING IN BEIRUT. HOWEVER, ON JULY 2 PHALANGE POLITICAL BUREAU MEMBER KARIM PAKRADOUNI (WHO HAS BEEN DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN SYRIAN-GOL AND SYRIAN-LEBANESE FRONT NEGOTIATIONS) TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE WAS CONCERNED THAT CEASE-FIRE (OF THAT DAY) MIGHT WELL NOT HOLD, BECAUSE THERE WERE MUCH DEEPER POLITICAL PROBLEMS TO BE RESOLVED. THE IMPLICATION WAS THAT THE SYRIANS, INDEED, WERE MAKING MAJOR DEMANDS, TO WHICH LEBANESE FRONT AND/OR GOL HAD NOT AGREED.

7. SYRIAN LINE. WE NOTE FROM EMBASSY DAMASCUS REPORTING (FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM'S VIEWS- DAMASCUS 3769; SYRIANS PROTEST AGAINST USG JULY 2 STATEMENT - DAMASCUS 3790) AND COMMENTS OF SYRIAN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON TO ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY CRAWFORD ON JULY 3 (STATE 168930) THAT THE SYRIANS ARE HIGHLY SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 03755 02 OF 03 061347Z

CONSISTENT: ADF WAS RESPONDING TO DELIBERATE PROVOCATION ON THE PART OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA, PARTICULARLY THE PHALANGE; PHALANGE AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN WERE TRYING TO IMPLEMENT A PLAN TO DESTROY MOVEMENT TOWARDS SECURITY IN LEBANON WHICH BEGAN WITH IHDIN OPERATION IN WHICH PHALANGISTS MILITIA ASSASSINATED TONY FRANJIYAH. WE DO NOT ACCEPT FOR A MOMENT, HOWEVER, SYRIAN LINE THAT PHALANGE ITSELF PERPETRATED THE BEKAA MASSACRE OF JUNE 28.

8. COMMENT: OUR OWN VIEW IS THAT CURRENT FIGHTING MUST BE VIEWED IN CONTEXT OF STRUGGLE BETWEEN RIGHTIST MILITIAS, PARTICULARLY THE PHALANGE, AND THE SYRIAN ADF, WHICH REALLY BEGAN EVEN BEFORE THE SYRIANS MARCHED INTO BEIRUT IN NOVEMBER 1976, WHEN THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE CHRISTIAN RESENTMENT THAT THE SYRIANS WOULD OCCUPY BOTH PALESTINO-LEFTIST AND CHRISTIAN AREAS. AFTER ALL, THE "LEBANESE FRONT" HAD THOUGHT THAT THE SYRIANS WERE TO ASSIST THEM IN THEIR LEGITIMATE AND LEGAL DEFENSE OF LEBANON.

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03755 03 OF 03 061354Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----031572 061402Z /50

O P 061252Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8575
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 3 OF 3 BEIRUT 3755

EXDIS

9. FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE SYRIAN OCCUPATION, BACHIR GEMAYEL IN PARTICULAR TOOK A HOSTILE AND HATEFUL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SYRIANS. EARLY IN 1977, PHALANGE TRAINING CAMPS IN THE MOUNTAINS WERE FEATURING IMAGES OF SYRIAN SOLDIERS AS TARGETS FOR RIFLE PRACTICE. THERE WERE NUMEROUS INCIDENTS THROUGHOUT 1977. BACHIR REGARDED IT AS AN INSULT THAT SYRIAN SOLDIERS SHOULD BE POSTED ANYWHERE NEAR PHALANGE PARTY OFFICES.

10. IN THE FEBRUARY 1978 FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS, THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS, PARTICULARLY THE PHALANGE, JUMPED TO THE AID OF THE LEBANESE ARMY IN ITS BRAWL WITH THE SYRIANS. WHEN, AS A RESULT OF THAT EPISODE, THE SYRIANS REGROUPED THEIR FORCES AND REDUCED THE NUMBER OF ROADBLOCKS IN EAST BEIRUT, BOTH BACHIR GEMAYEL AND DANY CHAMOUN WERE DELIGHTED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT. DANY AT ONE POINT TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT SYRIANS HAD FINALLY BEEN REDUCED TO THE ROLE OF TRAFFIC COPS, WHICH WAS ALL

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 03755 03 OF 03 061354Z

THAT WAS NEEDED OF THEM. IN APRIL 1978, FIGHTING BETWEEN RIGHTIST MILITIAS AND LEFTIST MILITIAS IN AYN AR-RUMMANEH-SHIAH METAMORPHASIZED INTO FIGHTING

BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND THE SYRIANS AFTER THE SYRIANS, AT THE REQUEST OF THE GOL AND ON THE BASIS OF A WRITTEN AGREEMENT, WHICH PIERRE GEMAYEL HIMSELF HAD SIGNED, ENTERED THE AREA BUT ENCOUNTERED PHALANGIST RESISTANCE.

11. MOST RECENTLY, OF COURSE, THE IHDIN OPERATION WAS A DIRECT PHALANGIST ASSAULT ON THE FRANJIYAH FAMILY, PROBABLY SYRIA'S MOST USEFUL CHRISTIAN FRIENDS IN LEBANON.

12. CAMILLE CHAMOUN MAY BE RIGHT IN HIS STATEMENT (PARA 2 ABOVE) THAT THE SYRIANS THIS TIME ARE OUT TO DESTROY THE PHALANGE AND NLP PARTIES, OR AT LEAST THEIR MILITIAS, ALTOGETHER, AND THE TONE OF THE DAMASCUS PRESS IN RECENT DAYS CERTAINLY SUPPORTS THAT VIEW. WE DON'T KNOW, BUT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO EVENTUALLY LEARN THAT MANY OF THE VARIOUS INCIDENTS IMMEDIATELY PRECEEDING THE GENERALIZATION OF FIGHTING ON JUN 1 WERE SYRIAN FABRICATIONS OR DELIBERATELY PROVOKED. THE SYRIANS WERE CERTAINLY PREPARED TO FIGHT.

13. THEIR METHODS MAY BE BRUTAL AND MILITARILY INAPPROPRIATE. THE SYRIANS ARE NOT VERY PRECISE ARTILLERYMEN, AND ARE INEPT AT HOUSE-TO-HOUSE STREET FIGHTING. THEY PROBABLY DON'T KNOW, HOWEVER, ANY BETTER WAY TO GO ABOUT IT. THE PITY IS THAT THEY MAY BE DIGGING THEIR OWN GRAVE, AS THE CHRISTIAN POPULATION OF LEBANON GENERALLY COMES TO PERCEIVE THE SYRIAN ARMY AS AN IMPLACABLE ENEMY AND FIGHTS BACK WITH INFERIOR ARTILLERY BUT BETTER KNOWLEDGE OF THE TERRAIN. THE PHALANGE AND
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 03755 03 OF 03 061354Z

NLP MILITIAS ARE SKILLED AT THE TYPE OF STREET FIGHTING WHICH, SOONER OR LATER, WILL BE INEVITABLE IF THE SYRIANS WANT TO ACHIEVE A MAXIMUM OBJECTIVE, FOR EXAMPLE, TO DESTROY THE PHALANGE AND NLP ALTOGETHER. THE MORE THE CRISIS DRAGS ON, THE GREATER THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY ITSELF WILL, IN IMPORTANT NUMBERS, DEFECT TO THE MILITIAS' CAUSE, FURTHER WEAKENING THE PRESENT SYRIAN MILITARY ADVANTAGE.
END COMMENT.

14. LATE ENTRY. MORNING OF JULY 6, THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRIVATE SECRETARY, ABDUL RAHMAN SHAYKHA TOLD EMBOFF SYRIANS HAD POSED TWO FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS FOR AN END TO THE FIGHTING: (A) THE RIGHT TO DEPLOY THEIR TROOPS ANYWHERE IN LEBANON; AND (B) THE DISARMING OF CHRISTIAN MILITIA (SEPTTEL).
PARKER

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT03755
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780277-0478
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780793/aaaaczvb.tel
Line Count: 331
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 97f3fb7a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2109789
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BEIRUT FIGHTING - SYRIAN INTENTIONS
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, LE, SY
To: STATE DAMASCUS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/97f3fb7a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014